

Memorial Resolution  
PROFESSOR EMERITUS WALTER A. KONETZKA  
(September 8, 1923 - August 23, 1992)

Walter A. Konetzka, Professor Emeritus of Microbiology at Indiana University, died August 23, 1992 after a brief illness. He was born in Shamokin, Pennsylvania September 8, 1923, the son of Walter Stanley Konetzka and Petronia (Krasowska).

After serving in the U. S. Marine Corps (1942-46), Walt completed his undergraduate and graduate studies in Microbiology at the University of Maryland. He was the Outstanding Senior in Sigma Alpha Omicron (1949). Following graduation, and after a year at the Merck and Company, he came to Indiana University as Assistant Professor at Bacteriology in 1955. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1959, to Professor in 1963, and he retired in 1988. During 1966-68, he was Head of the Division of Biological Sciences (and Professor of Biological Sciences) at the University of Maryland Baltimore Campus. This university in Catonsville has been designated to be the Prestige Campus of the University.

When the list of great teachers at Indiana University is compiled, Walter A. Konetzka will be included in the top rank. As an example of his excellent teaching ability and his attitude towards undergraduates, his introductory Microbiology course (an area often not chosen by many) was always over-subscribed. This stimulating course frequently caused students to change their major to Microbiology. Dean Fraser, a former chairman of the department, wrote that "Walter is certainly one of the best, if not the best, teacher at Indiana University. Walt is excellent at any level, and the number of enthusiastic comments is unbelievable."

This dedication to teaching was reflected in the many awards which Konetzka received. These included the Indiana University Lieber Award for Distinguished teaching (1965), the Carski Foundation Distinguished Teaching Award of the American Society of Microbiology (1970), three Senior Class teaching awards (1970, 1974, 1978), the Indiana University College of Arts and Sciences and Graduate School Alumni award (1981), and four Indiana University Senior Class awards for teaching excellence and dedication to undergraduates (1981, 1982, 1985, 1987).

For the required laboratory in the initial Microbiology course, Walt changed the formal laboratory work to the development of autotutorial laboratory exercises, in which the students work at their own pace in individual booths with tape recorded instructions for experiments. Time available was at the student's choice; during the usual daytime and early evening laboratory hours, an associate instructor was available. The autotutorial laboratory was very popular with the students, and Konetzka was invited frequently to speak on this topic at other campuses, at national meetings, and on television. He was one of the first if not the first, to adopt the autotutorial laboratory work to Microbiology.

To stimulate interest in Bacteriology (Microbiology) for high school and college science students, Walt developed (with L. S. McClung) a film, *A Career in Bacteriology*, which was shown at the inaugural opening session at a national meeting of the Society of American Bacteriologists (name changed in 1961 to American Society for Microbiology). To complete the series, he provided three other films relating to laboratory techniques, and beneficial and harmful aspects of microorganisms. With his general interest in biological education, the American Academy of Microbiology appointed Professor Konetzka as Chairman of the Committee on Undergraduate and Graduate Education (1971-73); he also served on the Commission of Undergraduate Education in the American Institute of Biological Sciences. During the period 1959-70, he was a member of the Editorial Board of the journal *Applied Microbiology*.

Although Walt was never interested in administrative positions, his deep commitment to improving instruction in Microbiology and Biology led him to accept the position of Coordinator for Undergraduate Teaching Programs in Biology (1966-71) and Associate Chairman of the Biology Department (1983-87). By then the biological science departments had become a Department of Biology.

Throughout his professional life, Walt constantly displayed a unique ability (unfortunately quite rare) to recognize and to correct gaps and deficiencies in the performance of our educational mission. Thus he was instrumental in the initiation of a series of courses (the Core Curriculum) for honors majors in biological sciences at the undergraduate level. This honors core was designed to provide an excellent foundation for graduate studies, as well as for medical and dental schools programs. Likewise, with the aid of others he designed and shared the teaching in a graduate course, "Molecular Aspects of Biology" (1964), which had an extraordinary, all-day Saturday laboratory class. This course was very valuable for all entering graduate students.

In addition to the above, Walt designed and taught for several years a course, "History of Microbiology." He also had a strong interest in environmental education, and he developed and taught for many years a senior-level course in Environmental Microbiology.

For the Indiana Branch of the American Society for Microbiology, Professor Konetzka served as Secretary-Treasurer, Vice President, and President (1961-62). As a Fellow of the Indiana Academy of Science, he chaired the Bacteriology Division and participated in the Visiting Scientist Program. He also served as a member of the Examination Committee of the National Registry of Microbiologists, and the Committee on Examination for Specialists in Public Health and Medical Laboratory Microbiology.

Walt was a member of the American Society for Microbiology (joining in 1956), Sigma Xi, Phi Kappa Phi, and Sigma Alpha Omicron (an honorary microbiological society).

Professor Konetzka's research (often with graduate and undergraduate students) included studies on degradation of lignin, inhibition of synthetic processes in bacteria and viruses, cross-resistance of bacteria to detergents and antibiotics, accumulation of metals in cells, mechanisms of chemo-attraction, and metabolism of magnetotactic bacteria. His research interests generally had important practical applications, such as development of systems for freeing the environment of toxic concentrations of metals.

In retirement, Konetzka spent much of his time creating and making Tiffany-style glass lamps, as a member of the Bloomington artists' cooperative "By Hand." An art conservator noted that Walt was remarkably talented and we have lost a great man.

Survivors include his wife Lillian (to whom he was married on November 24, 1949); three sons, Walter A. Konetzka, Jr., Kevin R. Konetzka, and Michael S. Konetzka; a daughter, Elizabeth A. Lindsey; a brother, John Konetzka; a sister, Anne Brennan; and five grandchildren. The family has suggested that friends who wish may make memorial contributions to the American Cancer Society.

His funeral, attended by his family and many friends, had the unique quality of including personal tributes from his major Ph.D. advisor, Michael J. Pelczar (University of Maryland); one of his earlier Ph.D. students, George M. Malacinski (Indiana University Biology faculty); his first foreign Ph.D. student, Ghoulem Berrah (Ivory Coast); his early laboratory demonstrator, Allen Williams (Minneapolis); and long-time friend, Martin Dworkin (University of Minnesota).

This document is part of the minutes of the Bloomington Faculty Council. It will be deposited in the University Archives. Copies will be sent to each of his survivors.

Leland S. McClung  
Eugene Weinberg